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Testimony of Libby Felten, Health Freedom Advocate
Pennsylvania Assembly - Hearing on HB 1717 Naturopathic Physician Licensing Bill

Contact info:

My name is Libby Felten and I oppose HB 1717

I am a Pennsylvania resident, parent, and consumer of natural health care. I am also a member of National Health Freedom Action, a national non-profit working with more than 30 states to protect the health freedoms of consumers across the country. I am testifying on behalf of Pennsylvania consumers and practitioners to protect consumer access to natural health care options and protect the rights of practitioners to provide natural health services

- Our opposition to HB1717 is three-fold:
 - It blocks consumer access to hundreds of natural health practitioners in Pennsylvania
 - It defines the term "Naturopath" too broadly thus making traditional and natural health care modalities illegal and
 - It lacks the safe harbor exemption that other states have adopted

Blocked access

Pennsylvania and national health freedom advocates oppose HB1717 because, first and foremost, it blocks consumer access to hundreds of natural health practitioners that Pennsylvania residents currently choose to serve their health needs

- Consumers have a right to choose from whom they receive natural health care information and advice.
- HB1717 would restrict this right to a small group of practitioners from a small group of schools, thus monopolizing the entire field of natural health and complementary and alternative health care services.
- This bill contains no exemptions for unlicensed persons and attempts to regulate the entire field of natural health care. This would be devastating to the number of consumer choices now available.

Criminalizes traditional naturopathy

The title "naturopath" is a word that has been used in the public domain for decades by thousands of natural health practitioners providing traditional natural practices. In modern times, naturopathy has split into two disciplines - traditional naturopaths and naturopathic physicians

The way this bill is written does not acknowledge or accommodate the practices traditional naturopaths who have no intention of becoming medical doctors or of going to medical school or providing medical services.

Examples of these traditional practitioners include homeopaths, herbalists, and aroma therapists.

- Proponents for naturopathic licensing bills will often say that they have no wish to put other practitioners out of business, but in reading the language of HB1717, it clearly criminalizes all traditional naturopathy and the use of the term naturopath with absolutely no exemption language for unlicensed traditional practitioners
- There are states such as California and Minnesota that have successfully passed licensing bills that contain the protections necessary for all other natural health practitioners. Without these protections, this bill is not beneficial to consumers or to the natural health community
- Proponents of HB1717 also say that there is a real need for the students from the five naturopathic colleges to get licensed in order to practice what they have learned in college. It is understandable that they would request permission to do dangerous procedures similar to medical doctors before they practice. However the